MR. CHAIRMAN: Shrimati Kamla Sinha ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI JAYANT MALHOUTRA: I would like the Minister to respond to this because it is a very important question. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Sir, I have already responded to his query. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Sir, if we go by the nature of this question, then it should be addressed to the Labour Ministry. Anyway, since the Mazgaon Dock does work for the Defence Ministry, the second part of the question is very relevant. Sir, Mazgaon Dock was created to meet the defence requirements of our Navy. Now, my question is a corollary to what the previous speaker ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is all right. Put your question. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Sir, I also visited the Mazgaon Dock and saw. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put your question.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Sir, I would like to say that the Mazgaon Dock can be made useful for our Navy if enough money is provided to build new naval vessels. For example, it can build submarines and other naval vessels. Why is the Government not providing enough money to the Mazgaon Dock?

श्री जॉर्ज फर्नान्डीज: जितना संभव है उतना काम वहां पर हो रहा है और उसको बढ़ाने के जो भी तौर-तरीके हैं, उनको अपनाने के लिए हम तैयार हैं।

Conversion of losses of Singareni collieries into equity

*243. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Andhra Pradesh Government has requested for conversion of losses of Singareni Collieries Company Limited into equity;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the issue has been pending for clearance before the Union Government for several years; and

(d) if so, the reasons for the delay?

THE MINISTER OF MINES AND MINERALS (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) No, Sir. There has been no request or proposal from the Government of Andhra Pradesh to the Central Government for conversion of losses of Singareni Collieries Company Limited into equity of the company.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of the answer to part (a) of the question.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, the Singareni Collieries Company Limited is a public sector company and comes under the Government of Andhra Pradesh. It is located in a highly sensitive area, which is mostly infected with Nexalism. It is one of the largest employed companies in the country. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has been requesting to increase the coal price. The decision of the Government of India has been inordinately delayed, resulting in the liquidity problem of the company. It has got a loan component of around Rs. 1,200 crores and the interest is mounting up. The Government of Andhra Pradesh requested for waiver of interest, but the Government of India has declared a moratorium on interest. Sir, interest is mounting up day-by-day. This is one big unit in Andhra Pradesh that has to be kept vibrant and viable. To make it more viable...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please ask your specific question. Do not explain all those things. The Minister knows about it.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, at least, a couple of sentences of synopsis are required to enlighten the supplementary. My first supplementary is this. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government of India is prepared to assist the company's programme to rationalize the establishment through voluntary retirement scheme from the National Renewal Fund.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, the Government of India has declared a moratorium on the payment of an outstanding interest of Rs. 663.34 crores as on 31st March, 1997, accruing on the loans of the Government of India to Singareni Collieries Company Limited during the VIII Plan period for a period up to 31st March, 2007, and allowing the Singareni Collieries Limited to start payment of the

amount of Rs. 663.34 crores in ten annual and equal installments starting from the year 2007. The power to fix coal price for A, B and C grades and coking coal has already been delegated to the Company in 1996. Sir, the Coal Company concerned as per the BICP formula can also fix the price for D and F grades. Thank you.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, my question has not been answered. My question is whether the Government of India will assist this unit in downsizing its establishment so that the unit would be made viable. This is my question. I have already conceded that the Government of India has declared moratorium and it had given ten years time to make the payment.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, as far as the V.R.S. is concerned, I would like to make certain points of what the Government of India has done and can do. It is appropriate to declare a moratorium on payment of an outstanding interest of Rs. 663.34 crores for a period up to 31st March, 2007.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: I am sorry to interrupt. Sir, I want a specific answer to my question. My question is whether the Government of India is prepared to assist...

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Do you want to know my reply on the V.R.S.?

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: I want to know whether the Government of India is prepared to assist the unit by giving some money from the National Renewal Fund for which it is meant, so that it can downsize the establishment.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: I will look into the matter and get back to the House with appropriate reply.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, to make this unit more viable, will the Government of India clear the request of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to open its new mines, pending clearance from the Planning Commission and the Department of Environment?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, the hon. Member's question is extremely relevant. I will certainly get back to the House with information.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, what is this? What for am I asking this question? It is to get some reply.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: I will examine the matter and get back to the House.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, is this the way to answer a question? Sir, the Minister is just reading out the answers prepared by his Secretary, and virtually there is no answer to my questions.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: I would like to inform the hon. Member that the Government of India has done a great deal for M/s Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. (SCCL). Also, Sir, it is partially the duty of the Government of India because the Government of India is a 49% share-holder of this company.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: It is all history. Sir, kindly direct the Minister to reply since it is a very burning question related to our State. The Singareni Collieries is located in a Naxalite-infected area. This unit has to be kept vibrant. My specific question is whether the Government of India will assist this unit to make it viable by providing some assistance from renewal fund and consider our request to open new blocks of mines so that the unit will become viable.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, I am sure the hon. Member is aware how sympathetic and helpful the Government of India has been to this particular unit, and the proposal for new projects are considered on merit and approvals will be given for technically feasible and financially viable projects. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, this is a very important issue which is agitating the minds of the people of Andhra Pradesh because these collieries have incurred heavy losses and the big problem is, as explained by the hon. Member, it is an extremist-infected area and there is already a lot of unrest in that area. We are thankful to the Government of India that it has given a moratorium, but at the same time, even with the facility of moratorium, it is very difficult for these mines to sustain. So, that being the case, I would like to know whether the Government is thinking in terms of giving relief by waiver of interest. Even after the period which the hon. Minister has announced, Sir, the company has to pay back the loan with interest,

but the company is not in a position, as of now, to do it. That being the case, I do not think any great improvement will come in the position of the company because of lack of equity for opening up new block which is now being sought by the company. Sir, the Minister has said that the Government of India will consider positively the request of the company for opening up new blocks. Now, at the same time, I would like to ask: Will the Government of India also consider the waiver of interest so that the company can become viable and able to sustain?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the hon. Member's question regarding the waiver of interest, as I said earlier, that it was appropriate to give moratorium and time for payment of outstanding interest of Rs. 663.34 crores up to 31st March, 2007 instead of writing off this amount, in view of the fact that Government of India has already provided 49% equity support of Rs. 750.52 crores to S.C.C.L. to match the 51% equity contribution of Government of Andhra Pradesh. In addition, the Government of India has given loans of Rs. 1785.82 crores to S.C.C.L., out of which a loan of Rs. 990.33 crores is outstanding as on 31st March, 1999. Sir, the Government of Andhra Pradesh does not give any loan to support S.C.C.L.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you satisfied with the answer?

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, the issue is related to sustaining the industry and activity there. As the Minister has rightly said, there is an outstanding amount of Rs. 990.33 crores. But whatever facilities that are being given by the Government of India, that is, with regard to 49% equity and all others, still the mines will not able to sustain. Sir, the repayment of loan is one aspect, but the waiver of interest is another aspect. So, I would like to know whether the Government of India will consider the waiver of interest?...(*Interruptions*)....

MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Sir, how does you allow the second supplementary? When we ask the second supplementary, you never allow us. How can you allow his second supplementary?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No second supplementary...(*Interruptions*)...

MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Sir, you never allow our second supplementary when we want it.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: If Madam is opposed to the interests and welfare of labour, I have no objection. I keep quiet....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

When the Singareni Collieries was nationalised, it had 95 working mines plus 17. After the nationalisation, 17 have been closed. Will the hon. Minister tell us whether he has any plans to reopen them, either by denationalisation or by opening them on his own, or will they be closed forever?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, I am sure the hon. Member knows the economic problems of SCCL. As far as the closed mines are concerned, the reserves have been exhausted. So, it is not practical to open those closed mines.

Thank you, Sir.

श्री गया सिंह: माननीय सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से यह कहना चाहता हूं कि जैसे कि कई माननीय सदस्यों ने कहा कि यह कोलियरी सिर्फ आन्ध्र प्रदेश के लिए ही नहीं बल्कि पूरे दक्षिण भारत के लिए बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण है। एन०टी०पी०सी० और रेलवे दोनों इसमें इनवाल्व्ड हैं और दोनों के लिए यह महत्वपूर्ण है। इसलिए लोग आपसे, भारत सरकार से यह एश्योरेंस चाहते हैं, जैसे कि आपने जवाब दिया कि कुछ लोन और इंटेरेस्ट को वेव करेंगे, क्या आप अपनी इक्विटी को बढ़ा कर रिस्ट्रक्चर करने की किसी योजना पर विचार करा रहे हैं?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, there has been restructuring earlier, which the hon. Member knows. This company has gone to the BIFR. Restructuring is going on at the moment as well.

Thank you.

Power Projects in Tamil Nadu

*244. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) how many power projects have been approved in the private sector as well as in the public sector for Tamil Nadu during the last two years;